



# Commandant's NOTE

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## STANDARDIZING OUR UNITS

In their times, the long bow, gunpowder, dynamite, machine-gun, tank, and nuclear weapon have all been cited as the ultimate weapon that would make warfare, or at least the foot soldier, obsolete. But these predictions have never materialized. In fact, such innovations have not led to our obsolescence or really changed our ultimate goal—the control of land, the natural environment of man.

The infantry remains the basic arm of any army faced with the task of taking and controlling land. As weapons have become more effective, however, we have been forced to seek wider dispersion or risk annihilation. As dispersion increases, though, so do our difficulties of maintaining control and of coordinating the actions of our many small units, and of achieving a sufficient concentration of power at the crucial time and place to achieve victory. Thus, the organization of our units, which is the basis for their control, is a matter of major interest.

Today, the different infantry rifle company organizations currently in the field complicate our efforts to establish one infantry, and cause problems throughout the infantry community. This lack of standardization affects the soldier-students and the instructors in the training base as well as the soldiers and unit leaders in the field who must learn different organizations and variations in applying doctrine for every assignment. As we at the Infantry School review and update Field Manual 7-8, The Infantry Squad and Platoon, and Field Manual 7-10, The Infantry Company, we are looking at the organizational structures of these units to identify ways of standardizing them. Through this process, we hope to improve and simplify task organizing. Conventional wisdom indicates that the pieces and parts of organizations should be common or standardized to the greatest extent possible; that is, barring a compelling reason not to, all types of squads, platoons, and even rifle companies should be organized along similar lines.

The modernized infantry squad consists of nine men. The requirements of control frequently affect the size and organization of our infantry rifle squads, as they have since the beginning of World War II. With a squad leader and two team leaders per squad, we have the best leader-to-led ratio at this level that we have ever had.

No single criterion, however, can be the sole deciding factor. Considerations of maneuverability and sustainability vie for second place followed by mobility and flexibility, while our need for more firepower has produced new weapons that have also affected the organization, though not necessarily the size, of the

squad. Thus, size may be based on one consideration and organization on another.

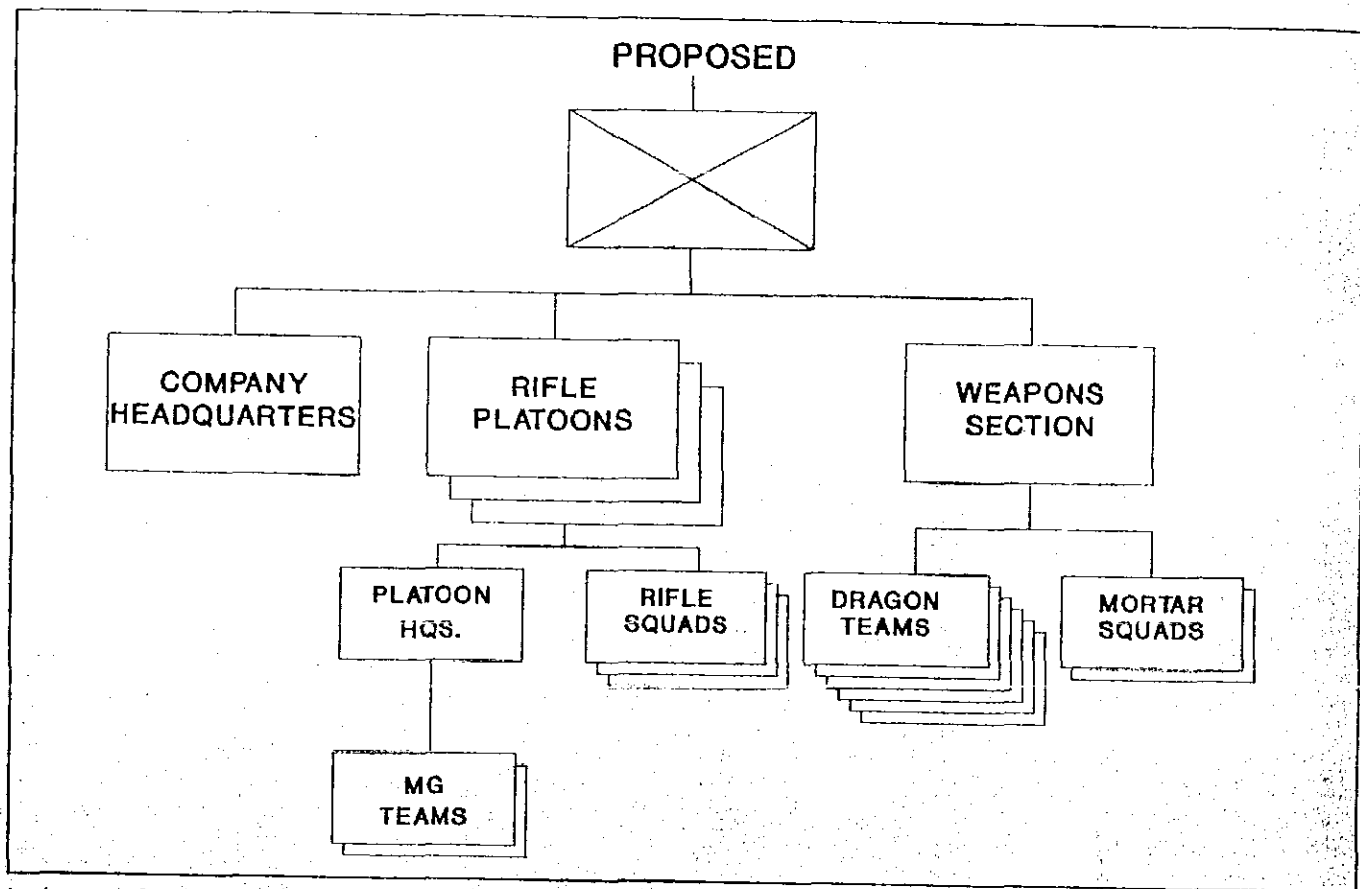
Since 1933, infantry squad size has varied from a minimum of 8 men to a maximum of 12. We have gone from no subdivisions of the squad to as many as three teams. Back in 1947, for example, we had a squad of nine men but did not doctrinally advocate splitting the squad. The general trend in small unit tactics that developed during World War II moved away from team play of fire and maneuver within the squad and toward a concept of assault fire, or fire and movement. With the increase to an 11-man squad in 1956, we went to a balanced two-team concept and employed fire and maneuver within the squad. We have come full cycle and are now back to a nine-man squad but retain the team concept as our fundamental means of fighting dismounted infantry.

Mechanized infantry (mounted in either the armored personnel carrier or the Bradley fighting vehicle) is the only real departure from the balanced team philosophy. The carrier team, with its substantial firepower, normally provides the base of fire that allows the dismount element to maneuver. But there will be situations in which the carrier element cannot provide that base of fire; then as Field Manual 7-7J, The Bradley Squad and Platoon, depicts, the platoon leader organizes to provide fire and maneuver from the platoon dismount element.

The squads of our infantry, airborne, air assault, light, and Ranger units are all pretty well established in both structure and doctrine. We do have some anomalies, though, at the platoon and rifle company level. For example, both airborne and air assault infantry rifle platoons have weapon squads. Light and Ranger platoons do not. Ranger platoons do have machinegun squads, however, and light infantry platoons without weapon squads have two machinegun teams each in their platoon headquarters. Typically, these weapon squads consist of antiarmor and machinegun teams (two of each) with a squad leader, totaling nine men.

The antiarmor teams that, with the machinegun teams, usually make up weapon squads are consolidated in the light infantry company in an antiarmor section at company level. Ranger companies have this same antiarmor capability together with a 60mm mortar section in a company weapons platoon. The 60mm mortar section in light, airborne, and air assault companies is a separate section under a staff sergeant.

Although these variances in organizational structure may not seem significant, they can have a disconcerting effect on junior



leaders transferring from one type of unit to another as well as on trainers and doctrine writers.

Since the infantry rifle squad organization (and size, for that matter) is now established as the standard, we feel the rifle platoon can also be standardized throughout the force and, in all probability, the rifle company, too—at least by TOE. Of course, we realize that a unit on the ground is not always going to be organized as the TOE developer or even the doctrine writer has visualized. For combat, leaders must task organize on the basis of METT-T. Nonetheless, as a point of departure, we should want all units to have the same basic organization.

Our current idea for standardizing the rifle platoon entails eliminating the weapon squad but retaining the two machinegun teams in the platoon headquarters (as the light divisions have now). We would then propose to consolidate all the company medium antiarmor systems (currently the Dragon) into a company antiarmor section. We feel this would improve unit Dragon training and support effective employment. In addition, because we would establish an antiarmor chain of command in the section, a growth pattern for soldiers from private to staff sergeant would give us stability and continuity.

Some spin-offs of this organization would be the elimination of a significant mobility differential within the rifle platoon. The Dragon teams are the most heavily burdened soldiers in the platoon, and a platoon can move only as fast as its slowest member. It would allow a company commander the greatest flexibility in employing his medium antitank capability and, when no armor threat existed, he would have the equivalent of an additional squad to use for reconnaissance, security, or a small company reserve. With the initiative typically demonstrated by infantry company commanders, there would be no end to the possibilities.

We are also looking at the feasibility of taking this idea one step further and joining our new antiarmor section with the 60mm mortar section. We could establish a company weapon section

or platoon, similar to that in the Ranger company today and in our rifle companies of a few years back.

This consolidation would reduce the company commander's span of control and place the heaviest burdens in a single section. And when transportation (HMMWVs from the support platoon, and the like) was provided, it could lift the equipment and ammunition of this entire section. We are looking for at least a sergeant first class to control the weapons section, which would also provide the company with another senior NCO. Even if the Dragon teams were attached to the rifle platoons for an operation, the senior NCO would be available to control the employment of the company mortar section while insuring the correct employment of the Dragon teams.

The battalion scout and mortar platoons are standard, and although the number of TOW platoons varies by type of battalion, the critical element, the platoon itself, is also standard. A recent change we are plugging into the scout platoons is a second platoon radio-telephone operator and radios for each squad. This will allow the platoon to operate its own net and employ its squads over a greater area.

We see the infantry's training mission as a sort of pyramid with the greatest number of personnel, the young soldiers, to be trained at the base. Moving up the pyramid, the number to be trained decreases, and the experience level increases. By simplifying and standardizing the tasks and organizations at the lower level, we should be able to improve the trainability of our soldiers.

In the final analysis, we are striving to improve command and control, training, and efficiency in all our units. Although we already have very effective units, we need to standardize and simplify as much as possible. We believe that standardization should be maximized at the squad, platoon, and company levels. Significant departures in organizational structures should begin only at battalion level, if necessary.